Imperial College Union
Board of Trustees / 29 July 2026

Capital and Strategic Investment Fund Priorities 2026/27

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Purpose: To note the Capital and Strategic Investment Planning Framework and approve the 2026/27 strategic investment designations
Decision(s): To approve the strategic investment designations set out in section 6.

1. Purpose and Scope

This paper sets out ICU's approach to Capital Planning and Strategic Investment. The paper summarises how much is available to invest in capital and strategic priorities, how we plan for and prioritise capital and strategic investment on a rolling basis, and the designations requested for 2026/27. The paper aims to provide the Board with an overview of the following:

- Where does the money come from?
- How do we decide what to prioritise?
- What do we need to spend money on, and why?
- How do we keep the plan current year on year?

The plan is refreshed annually; all budget holders submit requests for capital and strategic investments as part of the planning round and Union Council were consulted on priorities in June 2026. This aims to culminate in Board approval each July. We also propose to have a rolling bidding process for staff and students to request designations throughout the year.

The Board are requested to:

i. Note the approach and provide any feedback.
ii. Approve the designation requests for strategic investments.

2. Our Funding Model

ICU operates a dual funding model: charitable services (student groups, representation, advice, enabling infrastructure) and commercial surplus (venues, retail, events, sponsorship). Without a commercial surplus, there is no capital or strategic investment beyond what Imperial provides.

Pot	Covers	Source
Block Grant	Routine operational investment: IT, fixtures, lifecycle replacement	Block grant (Imperial)
Strategic Investment Fund - ***any funds above the reserve policy target***	Strategic investments or capital improvements: student experience, return, new capacity	Self-generated (commercial surplus),
College Funding	University estate infrastructure: structural works, utilities, CCTV, security	Imperial funding

3. Asset Lifecycle

ICU holds a fixed asset register. Assets depreciate over time, typically over 3 to 10 years depending on category. When an asset is fully depreciated it does not disappear, it continues to operate (often with increasing maintenance costs and risk) until it is replaced.

Asset replacement should be anticipated and budgeted rather than reactive and disruptive.

3.1 Standard Depreciation Schedule

Asset Category	Useful Life	Depreciation	Replacement Trigger
IT equipment	3 years	Straight line	End of life or significant maintenance costs
EPOS systems	5 years	Straight line	End of support major upgrade required
Commercial equipment	5 years	Straight line	Failure risk, compliance
Fixtures & Fittings	5 years	Straight line	Condition, student feedback
AV equipment	5 years	Straight line	Reliability, capability
Motor Vehicles	5 years	Straight line	Age, mileage, MoT status
Building improvements (minor)	5 years	Straight line	Condition review
Building improvements (major)	10 years	Straight line	Structural assessment

3.2 Asset Trigger

The finance team maintain an asset register (currently approximately 100 active assets). This register should be:

- Reviewed annually as part of the capital planning cycle
- Cross referenced with the 5-year capital plan to identify assets approaching end of life
- Updated whenever a capital investment is approved and delivered
- Used to flag items where replacement has not yet been budgeted

The capital threshold is £3,000. Items below the threshold are treated as operational expenditure and managed through department budgets.

3.3 Recurring Lifecycle Provisions

Two recurring annual provisions should be embedded in the operating budget and not treated as discretionary capital bids. [1]This is because they represent the cost of maintaining our operations. These provisions protect operational continuity as well as long term surplus generation. On occasions there will be a need to increase the investment in these areas over and beyond the annual provision, this would required a board level designation in line with investment priorities articulated in section X.

Provision	Annual Amount	Purpose
Building Maintenance	£20k	Planned preventative maintenance, minor refurbishments, compliance works, asset refresh in high use spaces

[1] Note: The 2026/27 budget (ref separate paper) captured depreciation on existing assets (including IUT) as well as some routine purchases including one new minibus. There is also a maintenance budget of £15k pa, which may involve some small capital purchases.

Commercial equipment replacement	£10k	Rolling replacement of EG fridges, catering equipment, EPOS hardware. Treated as cost of trading.

4. How We Prioritise

4.1 Investment Tiers

All capital and strategic investments proposals are assigned to one of four tiers. The tier determines the urgency and the decision making process.

Tier	Definition	Decision Route
1. Critical Infrastructure	Non-discretionary. Health & safety, compliance, operational continuity. Must be funded regardless of surplus position.	Annual budget sign off by Board
2. Lifecycle Replacement	Assets reaching end of useful life per depreciation schedule.	Annual plan approved at Finance, Audit and Risk
3. Strategic Enhancement	Revenue-generating, experience-improving or enabling investments. SIF principles adhered to. Subject to financial position.	SIF funding bid process, Board approve designations
4. Long Term/Transformational	5–10-year horizon. Major building works; campus expansion; full refurbishments. Requires College partnership and phased funding strategy.	Board endorse direction

4.2 Investment Principles

All tier 3 and 4 proposals must be assessed against the following principles:

i. Strategic alignment. Investment directly supports ICU's strategy and long-term priorities
ii. Student benefit. Demonstrable positive impact on student experience or engagement.
iii. Sustainability and return. Long-term impact, or generates financial or reputational return that sustains the organisation.
iv. Non-recurrent. One-off or time-limited; does not create ongoing revenue commitments without a funding plan
v. Commercial reinforcement. Where appropriate, enhances or protects commercial income, which sustains the Fund itself

Not every principle needs to be met, and in some cases a proposal may be compelling even if it strongly fulfils just one.

5. Current Monies Available

Based on the 2025/26 financial outturn paper it is anticipated that the strategic investment fund (that is funds available above the reserve target) will be at the level defined below and therefore available for Board designations.

Strategic Investment Fund 31/07/26 **£437,201**

6. Reserve Designations

The table below sets out the capital designations requested for Board approval for 2026/27, by investment tier, Union Council student voice evidence (June 2026 session) has been included for reference in the appendix. This is not proposing to spend all the strategic investment fund, but to hold back some funds for future priorities not yet fully known. It is likely that the building security will not have to be funded by ICU, but it is again prudent to provisionally designate in order to self-fund if there is any delay to University funding being released.

Item	£	Tier	Investment Principle
EPOS System Replacement	£20,000	1 – Critical Infrastructure	Tier 1
Building Security (access control & CCTV) — contingency provision*	£110,000	1 – Critical Infrastructure	Tier 1
Tier 1 (Critical Infrastructure) Sub-Total	**£130,000**		
Kitchen Upgrades	£30,000	2 – Lifecycle Replacement	Tier 2
Tier 2 (Lifecycle Replacement) Sub-Total	**£30,000**		
Office Layout Reconfiguration (All staff located on level 2, level 2m returned as a bookable student space, collaborative spaces, drop-in services)	£60,000	3 – Strategic Enhancement	Strategic alignment (improves collaborative working) Student benefit (better use of space)
Minibus	£50,000	3 – Strategic Enhancement	Student benefit.
Storage Improvements (student groups) (cataloguing and inventory work)	£10,000	3 – Strategic Enhancement	Student Benefit. Non recurrent.
Improved AV — Union Dining Hall	£15,000	3 – Strategic Enhancement	Student Benefit. Commercial reinforcement.
Digital Diagnostic & Fractional Support	£20,000	3 – Strategic Enhancement	Student Benefit. Non recurrent.
Tier 3 (Strategic Enhancement) Sub-Total	**£155,000**		
Total Designation 2026/27	**£315,000**		
Total Designation 2026/27 less building security	**£205,000**		
Remaining Strategic Investment including building security	**£122,201**		
Remaining Strategic Investment not including building security	**£232,201**		

**Verbal assurance the University will cover this investment which would be in line with ICU/Property SLA approved at UMB July 2026.*

Where funds will need to be set for purchases through Imperial Union Trading Ltd, these may require extension of the existing loan facility from the Charity and involve a longer-term payback, so their impact may only be short term. A loan facility extension of £50k is recommended to allow purchase of relevant items (EPOS and Kitchen upgrades) through IUT, which would be repayable on existing terms (on demand).

Appendix A: Additional Student Priorities Identified via Union Council (June 2026)

The following themes were raised independently and repeatedly in the June 2026 Union Council session but are not addressed by the 2026/27 capital designations in Section 3. They are noted here so they are not lost once this paper is submitted and to provide assurance that Union Council feedback has been incorporated.

Lobbying position to the University

Items relating to College-owned services or estate, where ICU's role is advocacy rather than direct delivery:

- Counselling waiting times — one detailed report of a 2–3 week wait for a postgraduate student in crisis. This is a College service; ICU's role is advocacy, not delivery.
- Accessibility of University-owned building fabric — step-free access to the UCH stage, building layout constraints (e.g. routing through MR3), West Basement Accessibility. Falls under College Funding (structural works), not ICU SIF.
- White City / Hammersmith union presence — repeated requests for union space, study/meeting rooms and wellbeing space on those campuses. Dependent on the College estate plan; an active negotiation, reinforced here by student-evidenced demand. To be referenced in Union multi campus approach and White City Operating Model.

Needs further work to determine ICU's own way forward

Items within ICU's control, but not yet scoped or costed:

- eActivities/SUMS replacement — the most heavily and consistently criticised system in the session. The Digital Diagnostic and Digital Strategy needs to come first as this will help inform future capital ask.
- Room booking system — recurring complaints about the booking process for student groups. Likely in scope of the Digital Strategy.
- Financial approval SLA for clubs and societies — multiple complaints that the two-week turnaround is too slow and inconsistently applied. Already flagged as a planning gap and to be addressed in Activities Team operational plans.

Appendix B: Capital Priorities — Union Council Feedback Summary (June 2026)

Summary of recurring themes from the Union Council engagement session (30 respondents), by frequency of independent mention, mapped to the 2026/27 capital designations where applicable.

Theme	Mentions	Representative comment	Related designation
Digital systems (SUMS/eActivities/apps/website)	10+	“Please fix your systems, there are too many issues surrounding the tech and online aspect of the union”; Digital Capability ranked joint-top priority theme (10 of 29 first-place votes)	Digital Diagnostic & Fractional Support £20k
Storage (student groups)	4	“storage!! so much storage and safety within [these] storage areas”	Storage Improvements £10k
Food & kitchen	5	“kitchen improvements — allow cheaper and better dietary options”	Kitchen Upgrades £30k

AV/technical equipment (Dining Hall & Council)	4	“Projectors in union dining hall!”	Improved AV — Union Dining Hall £15k
Minibuses	1	“Minibuses need to be cheap to fix, replacements desperately needed... clubs have to cancel whole tours”	Minibus £50k
White City / Hammersmith presence	4	“Union presence in white city... more study meeting space in white city”	Not costed — estate negotiation dependent (see Appendix A)
Room booking system	3	“Straightforward room booking system”	Not costed — needs scoping (see Appendix A)
Financial approval SLA (clubs & societies)	3	“Financial approval times for clubs and societies. Two weeks is not good enough”	Not costed — planning gap (see Appendix A)
Accessibility (building fabric)	3	“no step-free way to access the UCH stage”	College Funding — lobbying position (see Appendix A)
Counselling waiting times	1	“Students in crisis are being signposted to a 2–3 week waiting list for counselling”	Not ICU — College service (see Appendix A)

EPOS System Replacement, Office Layout Reconfiguration and the Building Security contingency are not evidenced in the Union Council session; these are justified on operational necessity respectively.